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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a speech communication unit that reflects the assumptions of competency-based education. The emphasis of the unit's content is on using knowledge rather than on how the knowledge is acquired. Students are required to participate in the decision-making processes of the unit to get them actively involved in their own learning and to make the course "life-centered." The procedures for an informative and a persuasive speech are described, showing how each student participates in a variety of roles and develops communication skills for them, throughout the communication process. (RL)

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A COMPETENCY-BASED SPEECH COMMUNICATION UNIT FOR SPEECH AND/OR LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS

by

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INTRODUCTION

As Willimore R. (Cy) Hastings put it in a recent convention meeting of the Speech Communciation association (SCA), "If you can't communicate orally, you are in one sorry mess." He was making the familiar but valid argument that anyone is definitely handicapped if he is unable to relate to others and communicate effectively with them. Unless an individual can so communicate with others about what he knows and what he can do, his abilities and potential certainly run the very danger of going unnoticed.

The purpose of this (Career Education Approach) competency-based unit, then, is to help the student become a better adjusted and more skilled communicator, one prepared to meet and cope with the communication requirements of everyday life, especially those encountered in face-to-face communication on the job. Throughout the unit, the emphasis is on helping the student understand communication and on giving him/her a variety of experiences in practical situations. The focus is intended to be competency-based/life-centered.

The approach to this unit rests upon some assumptions about competency-based education, your need to communicate, what constitutes humane education, and some evolving thoughts about life-centered education. Finally, the Unit is outlined. It was not my intent to belabor any of the above theoretical concepts before presenting the

Unit but, rather to demonstrate a cognitive facility with some goals for Curriculum Development in Speech Communication.

ASSUMPTIONS

Competency-Based Education

We are witnessing a shift toward tighter control over the instructional process. This shift is exemplified in the movement toward competency-based educational programs which seek greater precision in stating objectives, in choosing strategies and in evaluating results. Competency-based program designs call for systems, planning, cost-benefit analysis and other management and delivery systems. The focus of such programs is on the growth of the learner to levels of adequacy for particular tasks. Competencies are usually classified by criterion levels, i.e., knowledge, performance or product outcomes. The principle of accountability may, thus, be applied to all phases of the instruction. We assume that instructional designers must pay attention to the need for accountability, no matter what source or motive may underlie pressure for accountable systems. Some, mostly property owners, look at the rising costs of education and demand greater efficiency for the educational dollar spent in the public domain. Some, mostly social and political leaders, look at the disproportion in student achievement reported for minority students as compared with middle-class white students and demand that educational systems produce equitable performance among all students. Still others, including educators, look at the appalling human waste which results when instructors are required to be omnibus experts, instructing in all academic domains

and they call for a division of labor appropriate to the skills of instructors and needs of students.

While competency-based education (CBE) is morally neutral in that it is not inherently psoitive or negative in contributing to a humane educational environment,* it does force instructional designers into asking certain questions about the intended learning: questions which are extremely useful in rethinking the purpose of the instructional activities planned. Who are we teaching? With what means and for what expected results? Do we know enough about the student population to be served? Do we have access to all the resources required? Can we operate within the limitations of the time, personnel and curricular constraints imposed upon us? What specific strategies can be employed to reach the goals, both short term and long range, of the program? And finally, how will we know what we have accomplished when the instruction is completed? If we have a sure grasp on the goals we seek and if we are satisfied that they are humane then it remains to attend to the question of means raised by competency designs.

*It has been observed that CBE program design could be used by dictators for social control or by humanitarians with equal efficiency.

Your Need to Communicate

Everyone wants to be with others, at least a part of the time. And everyone feels the need to talk with others. For example, you normally go to public places--movies, meetings, sports events--with somebody. In fact, you will sometimes decide not to go somewhere

because you can't find someone to go along. It also happens that you sometimes "have to talk with somebody." You have something on your mind and you want to talk about it with a friend or with someone else you trust. Even if you don't have something special on your mind, sometimes you just want to talk with somebody about anything, including the weather.

Since man is a social being, he is unhappy if he has to be alone for any length of time. Although an individual may be shy and have some fears about meeting people, he still would like to be with them. And as you can see, being with someone or not being with someone is a kind of communication in itself. If you agree that "a man is known by the company he keeps," you also agree that you don't have to be talking or listening to be "communicating."

You also need to communicate because communication is the only way you have to let people know who you are, what you know, and what you can do. It is common to find a skilled and talented person working at a second-rank job because he isn't able to "sell his ideas" to others. Knowing how to be a dental technician won't help you much if the dentist doesn't feel that you can meet and talk in a friendly way with his patients. As a general rule, you'll also find that if anybody in a supervisory job is very good at his work--he is good at communication. Bobby Winkles, former manager of the California Angeles, has said, "I know being able to express myself has given me a lot of breaks." An educatin is valuable, and your being able to communicate can greatly increase the value of your education.

Look around at the people you know in your community. You'll find plenty of proof that the good communicator enjoys some practical advantages and some social advantages as well.

Humane Education

The central question raised here is whether educational programs can and will be developed which increase the power of individuals over their own lives. In other words, whether there will be programs which foster and support democratic institutions which allow individuals to make choices and sacrifices on a voluntary basis. Or will the new educational programs be founded on a new authoritarianism, distributing power (i.e., rewards) only to those individuals who conform to predetermined behavioral patterns? William Arrowsmith (1971, p. 52) has put the proposition in these words:

> What we must have, unless we are prepared to abandon our fates to parochial technicians, is precisely the pluralism to which we are committed. We need options, choices, alternatives; we need to honor the diversity of human skills and needs. We simply cannot afford, except at the cost of verything, to permit the range of realization to be narrowed to one small mode of the mind, and that a mode, which seems, in fact, to have lost respect for humanity.

We assume, therefore, that an educational strategy which maximizes student participation in key decisions of the learning experiences is more humane than one which limits the range of participation. If we are to have fully functioning individuals who make choices cope with the communication requirements of everyday life, especially those encountered in face-to-face communication on the job, and have compassion and respect for others, then we must have instructors and instruc-

tional programs that display these characteristics. Responsible people get to be responsible by being responsible. This truism represents the principle of humane education the writer has sought to provide in the (Career Education Approach) competency-based unit presented here.

Life-Centered Education

Current literature in higher education reflects a period of unprecedented innovation. During the past decade , one can chart the changes in the field through a series of "vintage" words which have served as the themes of national conventions. During the first portion of the social revolution, mounting pressure from disenfranchised groups produced such "demand" phrases as "equal opportunity," "relevance," "input," and "viability" of programs. More recently, those "demand" phrases have been replaced by themes that reflect a variety of responses: "new constituencies," "non-traditional studies," "open universities," "external degrees," "community-based education," etc. Each year some phrases are retired to the "cellar," more to recover from overuse than to mellow. Anyone who would use them for several years risks the label of "not being with it."

Educational historians will have to determine whether this has been a period of true educational reformation or simply a "reformation by rhetoric." There can be no doubt that several critical elements in post-secondary learning systems are being substantially modified, at least in some institutions. Figure 1 illustrates the major components of an adapted learning system and suggests that there is a dynamic interaction among these elements. It is the writer's premise that any

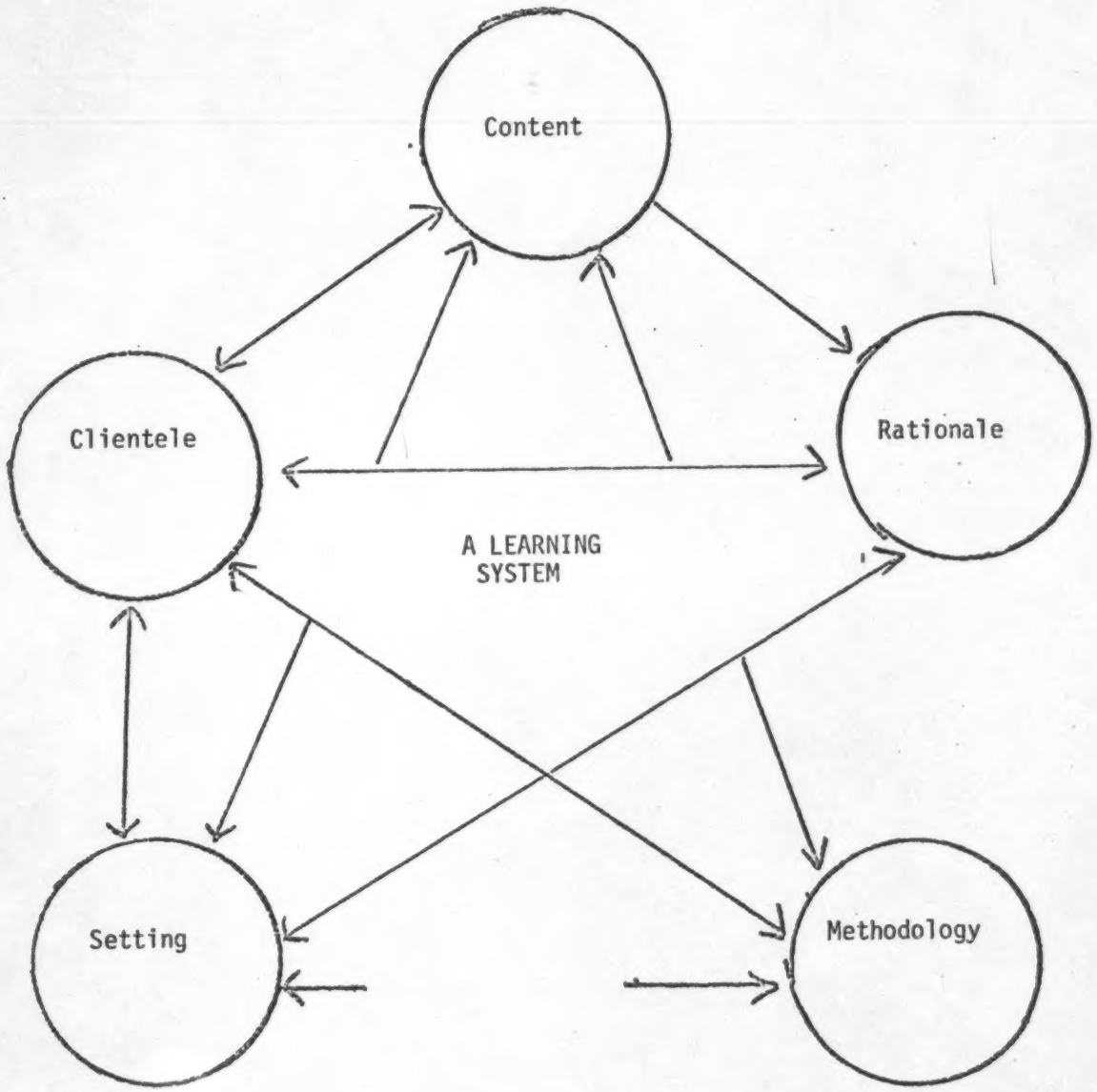
instructional unit should reflect these elements of a learning system.

What is to be learned? - - - - - - - - - Content
Why is it to be learned? - - - - - - - - Rationale
Who is to learn it? - - - - - - - - - - Clientele
How is it to be learned? - - - - - - - - Setting

Most of the current innovations have addressed the elements of clientele, methodology, and setting more than the elements of content and rationale. Yet, it is almost inevitable that major changes in conceptualization of clienteles, methodologies and settings will ultimately cause substantial modification in content and rationale. For example, the emergence of competency/performance based methodology has profound implications for potential changes in content. This, I feel, is illustrated in the Unit which follows. If one alters the emphasis on acquisition of knowledge to an emphasis upon use of the knowledge as in a competency model, the focus of content will be altered markedly. Or if one establishes a dynamic interactive relationship with "non-traditional" constituencies, those "new" learners may challenge the content by asking questions which force some change in focus of the content. In that case, the focus becomes more oriented toward life itself, the life that is being lived or might be lived.

Because the complexities of life have increased so much and because the changes in life are so rapid, it is not surprising that the desire for an education focused on life itself has intensified. Education for today's world is simply not adequate for the majority of people unless that education is life-centered and lifelong.

Figure 1. A Learning System (an adaptation)[1]



[1] Adapted from Dr. Max R. Raines, Life-Centered Education: Research and Report Series (Report No. 6, August, 1974), pp. 1-3.

THE UNIT

Learning Objectives

As the unit is examined, note that each requirement begins with a series of goals, the majority of them stated in measurable instructional or performance terms. Without going into a lengthy discussion of the theory of stating instructional objectives measurably or behaviorally, all agree that clear-cut objectives help the student sort out important elements in a module and reduce his anxieties. There are obvious advantages to a student's knowing in advance exactly how the instructor intends to work with him in his effort to gain control over substance and performance. The student also feels more comfortable and seems to work more efficiently if he/she knows that test or examination questions will call only for information or activities required by the objectives previously agreed upon.

Method of Instructions/Unit Requirements

A motivated sequence (see Figure 2) approach will be followed. Goal 1.0. Consistent with his/her career-education goal, each student will select a problem to be solved and present a series of different speeches following a motivated sequence format.

Step 1 ATTENTION	Step 2 NEED	Step 3 SATISFACTION	Step 4 VISUALIZATION	Step 5 ACTION
Getting attention	Showing the need; Describing the problem	Satisfying the need: Presenting the solution	Visualizing the results	Requesting action or approval

Figure 2. The Motivated Sequence[2]

Requirement 1. The Speech to Inform (use visual aids)

The student will:

1.1 Prepare and rpesent to the class a 7-to-10 minute informative speech using The Motivated Sequence Applied to Speeches to Inform (see Figure 3). This communicative effort will be considered satisfactorily completed if (1) the student presents to the instructor a complete outline using an Introduction, Body, and Conclusion, if (2) the Introduction includes a preview statement (nitial statement) specific purpose statement or Thesis Statement, if 93) the Body includes subpoints and the use of at least two appropriate visual aids, if (4) the Conclusion includes a restatement of the thesis, and if (5) 75 percent of the class agreee that you brought them to "an understanding or a better understanding of a certain body of knowledge."

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[2]Adapted from Monroe and Ehringer, Principles and Types of Speech Communication. (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1974), p. 355.

Figure 3. The Motivated Sequence Applied to Speeches to Inform

Step	Function	Audience Response
1. Attention Step.	Getting attention.	"I want to listen."
2. Need Step.	Demonstrating the need to know.	"I need information on this subject."
3. Satisfaction Step.	Presenting the information itself.	"The information being presented helps me understand the subject more satisfactorily."

Requirement 2. The Speech to Actuate

The student will:

2.1 Prepare and present to the class a 7-to-10 minute speech to actuate using The Motivated Sequence Applied to Speeches to Actuate (see Figure 4). This communicative effort will be considered satisfactorily complete if (1) the student presents to the instructor a complete outline using an Introduction, Body, and Conclusion, if (2) the Introduction includes a preview statement (initial statement), specific purpose statement, and clearly worded statement of a problme, if (3) the Body contains or includes the use of at least two appropriate visual aids and 5 to 7 different kinds of supporting data (these will be sub-points), and if (4) the Conclusion includes a call for action to solve the problem.

Figure 4. The Motivated Sequence Applied to Speeches to Actuate

Step	Function	Audience Response
1. Attention Step.	Getting attention.	"I want to listen."
2. Need Step.	Showing the need: describing the problem.	"Something needs to be done (decided, or felt)."
3. Satisfaction Step.	Satisfying the need: presenting the solution.	"This is what to do (believe, or feel) to satisfy the need."
4. Visualization Step.	Visualizing the results.	"I can see myself enjoying the satisfaction of doing (believing, or feeling) this."
5. Action Step.	Requesting action or approval.	"I will do (believe, or feel) this."

Goal 2.0 Consistent with his/her career-education goal, each student will, through an adaptation of The Nominal Group Process (see Figure 5), utilize adequate communication skills with his/her constituents, in choosing a problem to be solved and criteria for solutions to a problem.

The student will:

2.1 Team up with five other students to take part in a problem-solving effort extending over several class periods. The same problem may be studied by all groups, or each group may choose a different problem arrived at through The Nominal Group Process. Assuming that approximately six class periods are available for discussion of a problem, the work to be accomplished can be divided along these or similar lines:

Period 1: Meeting of the group to choose a problem to be investigated; attempt to state it clearly; assignment of fact-finding tasks to individual students or pairs of students.

Period 2: Discussion of facts collected and use of them in attempts to answer the sub-questions associated with fact-finding.

Period 3: Determination of whether or not additional facts are needed; decision on what is to be done to get them. Beginning of inquiry into causes of the problem.

Period 4: Attempt to pinpoint the causes of the problem.

Period 5: Proposal of possible solutions to the problem.

Period 6: Selection of solution or combination of solutions.

Six periods give every student in a six-student group one chance to act as group leader, four chances to act as a working member of the group, and one assignment to act as "recording observer." These tasks can be assigned in rotation from one class period to the next. Finally, the Unit allows for other competency-based innovative teaching/learning techniques, such as, providing students with opportunities to select life-centered topics for their speeches.

Figure 5. The Nominal Group Process (an adaptation)[3]

Focus	Steps	Procedures	Time
IDEAS GENERATING	Silent Brainstorming	Members record their individual responses to questions	
	Idea Recording (Problems/ Solutions)	Round-Robin listing without comment	
	Idea Clarification (Problems/ Solutions)	Discussion without judgement from group	
PRIORITY SETTING	Ranking Ideas (Problems/ Solutions)	Members rank the ten most important ideas (problems/ solutions) individually	
	Recording Group Judgements	Members post/list their ranking by their selected items (problems/solutions)	
	Discussion	Group discusses and defends relative merits of various ideas (problems/solutions)	
	Scoring Period	Members individually score top ten items (problems/ solutions) on 100 point scale and turn in scores	

[3]Adapted from Van de Ven and Delbecq, "The Nominal Group As a Research Instrument for Exploratory Health Studies," American Journal of Public Health, (June, 1971), pp. 338-342.

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